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FOR DS/OSAC AND DS/IP/WHA

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: 2009 CIUDAD JUAREZ OSAC CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT

I. (U) Overall Crime and Safety Situation:

A. Crime Threats

The Department's Critical Crime Threat Level for this industrial border city of 1.6 million people does not convey the scope of the violence in Ciudad Juarez. Although Mexican media and government sources offer varying crime statistics for Ciudad Juarez, all sources indicate that there were at least 1600 murders committed in and around the city in 2008. More than 70 police officers and soldiers were killed in Ciudad Juarez during the year. Mexican cartels battling for control of regional drug trafficking routes caused widespread disruption in the functioning of city, state and federal government agencies. Cartel violence significantly undermined local confidence in the capacity of Mexican government institutions, including the army, to guarantee public security.

There were 55 known cases of kidnapping, and more than 300 known cases of sexual assault and rape, including child molestation, in the state of Chihuahua during 2008. Many crimes of this nature are not reported to the police for reasons described below in this report. Furthermore, there were approximately 86 bank robberies and 17,000 car thefts, including as many as 1,650 carjackings.

Violent crime is a fact of everyday life in Ciudad Juarez. No trends indicate that criminals in Juarez specifically target U.S. citizens. Instead, they select victims based on an appearance of vulnerability, prosperity or inattentiveness, particularly in the downtown bar area.

Americans in Juarez need to guard against robbery, theft, and burglary. Displays of cash, jewelry or other signs of wealth are magnets for armed street thieves and pickpockets, and items of minor value left in a car can trigger a break-in even when left for only a few minutes. Hotel guests should keep valuables in secure locations. Do not leave jewelry, money, identity documents, or other valuable items unattended in hotel rooms.

B. Personal Safety

1. Remain on constant alert for street crime (i.e. armed robbery, pocket-picking, purse-snatching, ATM robbery, etc.).

2. Maintain a low profile. Dress casually and keep valuables out of sight. Do not draw attention to yourself.

3. Vary your routine. Be unpredictable in your movements. Vary your routes and your departure and arrival times.

4. Be alert to surveillance. Note and avoid anyone who appears out of place along your routes to regularly scheduled activities. Avoid sitting outside at restaurants. Instead, try to find seats in areas not clearly visible from the street.

5. Stay informed. Be aware of popular scams and robbery tactics used to distract your attention.

6. Reduce the incentive for someone to rob you and minimize the possible loss. Do not carry valuables or large sums of money, avoid wearing jewelry, and carry your wallet in your front trouser pocket or front jacket pocket.

¶7. When hiring domestic help, check references and criminal history as thoroughly as possible and ensure that they are trained not to volunteer information to strangers or to allow access to workers without prior authorization.

¶8. Take normal tourist precautions when drinking water and eating fresh fruits, vegetables, and salads.

¶9. Do not buy prescription medications in Mexico unless you have a prescription from a Mexican doctor.

#### ¶C. Driver Safety

Driving in Juarez requires vigilance and a defensive attitude. Local drivers are not uniformly well experienced, and often have poorly maintained cars. Road signs and traffic lights are not always clear. Drivers in Ciudad Juarez should give a wide berth to public buses, which are known for careless driving.

Road conditions are poor in most areas outside of downtown. Potholes and trenches can damage your car or cause drivers to swerve into your lane or brake unexpectedly. Manhole covers may be removed at any time, but more often when roads flood, in order to drain an area more quickly. Open manholes are hard to spot.

#### ¶D. Protecting Your Vehicle

The head and taillights are held in place by easily accessible screws. Install grilles around the lights.

If your tire is mounted on the outside the vehicle, secure it in place with a chain and padlock or similar device.

Theft of a vehicle's operating computer is a common crime, as is theft of car sound systems. Car alarms are strongly recommended. Keep your vehicle free of anything of value, and store out of plain view anything that would entice a thief.

Replace one lug nut on each wheel with a specially keyed bolt that locks or can only be removed with a special attachment to the tire iron.

Avoid leaving your vehicle on the street. Park inside a residential compound, in a parking lot with an attendant, or within view of the location of your visit.

#### ¶E. Public Transportation

Avoid public transportation. In addition to harboring potential pick-pockets, city buses are known for reckless driving. Taxis in Juarez are generally safer and more reliable. Taxis are required to be registered with the government, but they are usually not metered and may overcharge. Taxis from the airport are paid in advance in the terminal and are well regulated.

### II. (U) Political Violence

#### ¶A. Civil Unrest

Northern Mexico is not historically anti-American, but rather, well-integrated by family and commercial ties with the U.S. border states. Anti-American sentiment is seldom expressed toward U.S. citizens in Ciudad Juarez. The infrequent occurrences in Juarez of trade- or foreign policy-related protest generally do not affect visitors and expatriates.

#### ¶B. Demonstrations

Peaceful demonstrations against U.S. policies sometimes occur at the U.S. Consulate General and the border bridges. Avoid demonstrations because the potential for violence exists when there is a crowd in Juarez.

#### ¶C. International Terrorism

International drug trafficking organizations are responsible for

most of the homicides and other organized criminal activity in Ciudad Juarez and the State of Chihuahua. Although no trends indicate that US Citizens are specifically targeted for violence by these organizations, assassinations of police officers and other government officials, and other murders, often occur in public places and in traffic in Ciudad Juarez. Any public place at any time of day or night could turn into the wrong place at the wrong time.

Lax immigration controls, the ease with which fake Mexican travel documents can be obtained, and Mexico's geographic location make the country an attractive transit point for transnational terrorists.

### III. (U) Post Specific Concerns

#### A. Murder

Drug related murders can occur anytime in any part of Ciudad Juarez, and ordinary residents can be caught in the crossfire. Remain alert for trouble at all times, and constantly review escape routes and potential safe-havens as you travel in the city.

#### B. Robbery

Commercial establishments and their patrons, such as stores and restaurants, are increasingly targeted for robbery.

#### C. Kidnapping

There are many forms of kidnapping in Mexico. For instance, "virtual kidnapping" is the term used when criminals falsely claim to have kidnapped a victim in order to quickly obtain a ransom, and those cases increased 500% in Ciudad Juarez in 2008 with more than 600 reported incidents. There have been incidents where US Citizens were kidnapped in or near Ciudad Juarez, but no trends indicate that US Citizens are being specifically targeted.

#### D. Floods

Avoid driving during and after rainstorms because improper drainage creates street flooding, submerged potholes and open manholes.

### IV. (U) Police Response

#### A. Crime Victim Assistance

The Mexican police emergency telephone number is 066, but authorities may not respond to a call in a timely fashion, if at all.

The Juarez city police force is undersized and underfunded. Police training does not meet U.S. standards. At least 400 officers, one quarter of the police force, were fired in 2008 for gross ( drug cartel-related) corruption. Reporting a crime is an archaic, exhausting process in Mexico, and is widely perceived by Mexicans to be a waste of time except for the most serious incidents or where a police report is required for insurance purposes. A general perception is that most victims do not report crimes against them due to the fear of reprisals by the criminals, the belief that police are corrupt, or the feeling that nothing would come from such reports. However, victims should still report crimes.

The police may require accident or crime victims to accompany them to a police station in order to make a report, but bear in mind that criminals have impersonated Juarez police officers. The police will charge a nominal fee if a police report is required for an insurance claim or other purposes.

The American Citizen Services unit of the Consulate General (numbers listed below) is available to assist victims.

#### B. Detention by Police

Before you begin driving in Juarez on a regular basis, photocopy the following documents for the vehicle, driver, and each passenger:

- U.S. Passport ID page
- Mexican Visa
- U.S. Driver's License
- Vehicle Registration (Tarjeta de Circulacion)
- Proof of Insurance
- Temporary or Free Entry Permit

If you are stopped by police authorities and do not believe that you have done anything wrong, it may be better to give the police officer the photocopies rather than your actual documents.

If the officer continues to question you or if Spanish language issues make it hard to communicate, then give the following statement to the officer:

"No hablo ni entiendo bien el español. Si usted considera que he cometido una infracción de tránsito, expida el recibo de multa que la ampara. Si existe algún otro problema, por favor solicite la presencia de un elemento de policía que hable inglés. Gracias."

This translates as:

"I do not speak or understand Spanish. If you believe I have committed a traffic violation, then give me a ticket. If there is some other problem, please request the assistance of another policeman who can speak English. Thank you."

This suggested course of action is not intended to avoid responsibility for legitimate traffic violations or infractions of Mexican law.

Do not offer "tips" or bribes in any form to police officers after a traffic stop. In the event that the officer should suggest anything other than a normal resolution to a traffic violation, note the officer's badge number, name tag, or police vehicle number, and provide it to the American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Consulate General Ciudad Juarez (numbers listed below) as soon as possible.

#### IV. (U) Medical Emergencies

Call 066 in the event of a medical emergency. Information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs Medical Information for Americans Abroad webpage:  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures\\_1215.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1215.html).

#### A. Health Concerns

Ciudad Juarez presents some health concerns regarding food, and some travelers have adverse reactions to the pollution and dusty environment. Therefore, health insurance is an important consideration while in Mexico. Though increasing numbers of

Americans obtain health care in Mexico, elective surgery facilities may lack access to sufficient emergency support.

#### B. Local Health Care Providers

The Consulate does not recommend any particular health provider but lists the following for informational purposes only:

Hospital Los Angeles  
Campos Eliseos 9371  
Fracc. Campos Eliseos  
Cd. Juarez  
Telephone - (656) 625-0611

Centro Medico de Especialidades

Av. de las Americas 201 Norte  
Col. Margaritas  
Cd. Juarez  
Telephone - (656) 686-0400  
Hospital Poliplaza Medica  
Pedro Rosales de Leon 7510  
Cd. Juarez  
Telephone - (656) 617-3200, 617-0465

Hospital Star Medica  
Paseo de la Victoria No 4370  
Fracc. Partido Iglesias  
Cd. Juarez  
Telephone - (656) 227-5700

More information is listed on the website for the American  
Citizen Services section of the U.S. Consulate:  
<http://ciudadjuarez.usconsulate.gov/wwwhacs.html>.

#### 1C. Air Ambulance Services

For medical transportation to the U.S., you may contact Air  
Ambulance Professionals at: (800) 752-4195. Other companies are  
listed on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs  
Medical Information for Americans Abroad webpage:  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures\\_1215.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1215.html).

### VI. (U) Travel Precautions

#### 1A. Preparing Your Vehicle for Long Trips

Prior to road travel, ensure that your vehicle is in good  
operating condition. Pay particular attention to the engine,  
tires, brakes, head- and taillights, spare tire, jack, horn, and  
fluid levels. Particularly on long trips to remote areas, try  
to travel in tandem with other vehicles and advise someone of  
your travel plans, including anticipated arrival and departure  
times and contact numbers.

Take the following items on long road trips: (1) cellular  
telephone with charger (although some areas between cities lack  
coverage); (2) an extra spare tire; (3) portable gas can with  
funnel; (4) potable water; (5) non-perishable food items; (6)  
first aid kit; (7) blankets; and (8) fire extinguisher. You  
will also need an emergency tool kit with the following items:  
(1) flashlight and additional batteries; (2) battery-operated  
radio; (3) extra fan belt/drive belt; (4) extra fuses, spark  
plugs, and light bulbs; (5) duplicate ignition key; (6)  
screwdrivers (regular and Phillips head); (7) socket wrench set;  
(8) pliers; (9) Electrical tape; (10) Jumper cables; (11)  
compressed air tire pump; (12) flares/reflectors; and (13) a  
collapsible shovel.

#### 1B. Highway Driving

Highway driving can be precarious, especially at night. Avoid  
travel after dark, and use inter-city toll highways whenever  
possible. Toll roads are called cuotas in Mexico and are  
indicated by the capital letter "D" printed below the highway  
route number on area maps. Plan your route ahead of time.

#### 1C. Firearms

U.S. citizens must leave all weapons in the U.S. Bringing any  
firearm or ammunition into Mexico is an offense punishable by  
jail time, and small weapons such as pocketknives can result in  
concealed weapons charges if you are detained by the police.

### VII. Contact Information for the US Consulate General in Ciudad Juarez

#### 1A. Telephone Numbers

To contact the U.S. Consulate General Ciudad Juarez, call

656-227-3000. From the U.S. dial 915-534-6060 or  
011-52-656-227-3000. The Mexico country code is 52, and the

Ciudad Juarez area code is 656.

Consulate hours are 0800-1645 M-F. The after-hours Emergency Duty Officer telephone number is 044-656-327-7787 (if calling from the U.S., dial 011-52-1-656-265-8484).

1B. The U.S. Consulate General is located at:

Paseo de la Victoria #3650  
Fracc. Partido Senecz  
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua C.P. 32543

VIII. The point of contact for the OSAC Country Council is Oscar Kuri at 656-632-5882 and okuri@celc-tat.com.mx.

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